

Joint Commission on Shared Services Initiatives

**Annual Report
April 2011**



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Purpose: To examine and identify opportunities for potential shared services among the governments, and to recommend to the respective governing bodies the approval of concepts and strategies for implementing those shared services that increase efficiency, improve quality, or reduce costs in the delivery of public services, without sacrificing public accountability.

County Members

Colleen Bates
Gregg Moore
Gerald Wilkie

City Members

Dave Duax
Kerry Kincaid
Jackie Pavelski

School District Members

Carol Craig
Kathryn Duax

Staff

Mike Huggins, City Manager
Linda DesForge, Administrative Secretary

J. Thomas McCarty, County Administrator
Jeanna Allen, Administrative Assistant

Ron Heilmann, Superintendent Eau Claire School District

Background

The Joint Commission on Shared Services Initiatives was established through resolutions of the Eau Claire County Board of Supervisors on March 2, 2006, and the Eau Claire City Council on March 28, 2006. The Joint Commission originally consisted of three representatives from the Eau Claire County Board and three representatives from the Eau Claire City Council. Initial appointments to the Joint Commission were confirmed during the summer of 2006, and the first meeting was held on September 26, 2006. An annual report of the Commission activities was prepared in March 2008 that identified Commission findings and recommendation on ten shared service opportunities. The March 2008 report also established recommendations and action steps for the next two years. In July 2009, the Commission expanded to include members of the Eau Claire School District.

Current Commission members include: County Board Chair Gregg Moore, Supervisors Colleen Bates and Gerald Wilkie; City County President Kerry Kincaid, Council Members Dave Duax and Jackie Pavelski; School Board President Carol Craig and School Board Member Kathryn Duax. City Councilman Dave Duax and County Board Supervisor Colleen Bates serve the Commission as the Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. The Commission has established the 4th Thursday of each month at 7:30 a.m. as its regular meeting time.

The ongoing tasks of the Joint Commission are to examine potential City/County/School District shared services opportunities, and make recommendations to the respective governing bodies regarding future joint initiatives. Major responsibilities include the following:

- Monitor progress and ensure accountability for the shared services initiative;
- Provide political will/support for shared services initiatives;
- Provide reports to respective elected bodies;
- Select shared services initiatives for consideration;
- Assess potential for future shared services initiatives;
- Evaluate overall effectiveness of shared services initiative as a pilot effort;
- Refine and approve evaluation criteria for project feasibility and implementation;
- Review joint organizational strategies and policies for implementing shared services initiatives;
- Address key political and legal obstacles to implementing initiatives;
- Provide an opportunity for public discussion of shared services issues and initiatives.

Shared Services Rationale

A key role of the Joint Commission is to provide ongoing support and encouragement for exploring and building effective intergovernmental partnerships. The rationale for this role draws on the following key principles:

- The collaborative civic culture of the greater Eau Claire community is a significant asset in working jointly to solve problems and expand shared service partnerships.

- Initial cost savings for budget reductions should not be the only criteria in deciding whether to enter into shared service partnerships, particularly in the information technology arena. Initial increased costs could lead to more effective future collaborations, equitable cost sharing and overall cost savings for the taxpayer by reducing current transaction costs for the City, County, School District and customer, as well as avoiding future long-term costs. The City, County and School District budget and capital improvement project decision criteria should include consideration of potential long-term operational impacts of joint collaborative efforts, and not be restricted to only consideration of initial or first year expenditures.
- An important factor in long-term success in building effective shared services partnerships will be strengthening a shift in the organizational cultures of the organizations to promote the concept of collaboration as one of the customary approaches to problem solving and program implementation. The Joint Commission provides a means of maintaining public policy focus on the concept of shared services.
- Opportunities for exploring shared services between the City, County and School District are fluid and often change with the shifting availability of resources and priorities. The purchase and implementation timeframes of technology and software projects, for example, tend to extend over several years, and do not necessarily coincide. Consequently, all organizations should be more intentional about working jointly to create more points of convergence prior to major budget and capital improvement decisions.
- It is important to acknowledge the budgetary challenges confronting the City, County and School District in trying to synchronize their capital investment decisions. The organizations should be intentional about creating mutual windows of opportunity for shared services.
- The following strategies and commitments are especially critical to implementing successful and effective shared services:
 - Effective intergovernmental operational partnerships will require specific allocations of staff time and resources to be successful. In times of levy limits and budgetary fiscal constraints, this may require a reduction or deferral of other operational projects in order to allocate the needed resources.
 - Government service partners that differ significantly in size, scope, or program budgets will need to be prepared to address how to reach compromises about different standards and expectations for service delivery.
 - Existing procedures, regulations, statutes, or data practices that limit the ability of different organizations to share basic information will need to be altered.

- Regular informal and formal communication and sharing of information throughout the organizations will be essential to ensure that the organizations can identify issues, clarify mutual responsibilities, and address the inevitable problems and misunderstandings that occur as partnerships are developed and implemented.

Commission Findings Regarding 2010 – 2011 Potential Shared Service Opportunities

Summarized below are the Commission's Findings and recommendations regarding the priority shared service opportunities identified for 2010 – 2011.

Priority 2010 – 2011 Shared Service Projects

1.) Information Services, e-Government and Web Site Services

Status: The City, County and School District collaborated with many other organizations in the planning, development and use of fiber optic systems for electronic communication and data transfer. The three organizations, in collaboration with fifteen other organizations submitted and received a Broadband Technologies Opportunity Grant (BTOP) in the amount of \$12 million for the Chippewa Valley. The Chippewa Valley Internetworking Consortium (CINC) is developing an intergovernmental agreement, and identifying structural and governance elements for all the partners.

Recommendations: The City, County and School District continue working with other CINC partners to complete the development of the intergovernmental agreement and memorandum of understanding and bylaws to be considered by all partners by December 2011. The CINC Network will work with UW-Extension and partners to implement the BTOP grant for the Chippewa Valley over the next two years.

2.) Employee Health Care Costs/Wellness

Status: The City, County and School District continue to share information on increased wellness programming. The Commission received a report outlining the current health care costs and programs of the three organizations. The report noted unique wellness programs associated with each organization, including costs and cost savings attributable to the programs.

Recommendations: The City, County and School District will continue to share information on employee health care costs and the parameters and performance of employee wellness programs. Representatives of each organization will meet regularly to focus on approaches that decrease employee usage of health insurance and increase wellness programs.

3.) Building Code Inspections

Status: The City and County have approved an intergovernmental agreement for implementation of a shared land records software package for assessing and land records permit tracking applications. The agreement provides for the sharing of costs related to purchase of maintenance of software, hardware and associated equipment.

The City of Eau Claire and six adjoining Towns have approved an intergovernmental agreement regarding land use policies and procedures affecting the City of Eau Claire Extraterritorial Jurisdiction.

Recommendations: The City and County continue efforts to expand shared services in the land records management functions.

During 2011, the County will review the approved intergovernmental agreement between the City and Towns, and analyze potential changes necessary to the county comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, stormwater/erosion control ordinance and additional recommendations. Recommendations will then be brought forward to the County Board for necessary action.

When development activity increases, the City and County will consider a shared position to reduce costs to both jurisdictions.

4.) Transportation

Status: A workgroup has been formed to investigate establishment of a Regional Transit Authority. The Commission will be kept advised on progress.

Student Transit: The Commission held two meetings with Student Transit and City Transit staff in late 2010.

Recommendations: Based on study and the ensuing discussion, the Commission decided that collaborative efforts to ensure cost efficient transportation to students and citizens are being accomplished by the current protocol of services providers. It is recommended that City Transit and Student Transit continue their collaborative initiatives as identified in the Transportation Report (dated March 23, 2011). Barring any change in School District student transportation policy, no further study is recommended. Any new education and safety initiative would emanate from independent initiatives from the School District, City Transit or Student Transit.

Additional Shared Projects/Opportunities Considered in 2010 – 2011

- 1.) Capital Project Planning
Status: The City/County Director of Purchasing reported that the Bid/RFP process for the City of Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, and the Eau Claire School District is now being carried out via Onvia DemandStar.
- 2.) Recycling
Status: A preliminary report from the Eau Claire County Planning & Development Director was received by the Joint Commission. An inventory report is forthcoming.
- 3.) Health Insurance Plan Collaboration
Status: The City/County Purchasing Director appeared before the Commission to report on the health insurance plans of the three entities. Staff continues to meet to discuss opportunities for collaboration, and issues with health plans.
- 4.) Fleet Vehicles
Status: Eau Claire County will complete a comprehensive fleet vehicle analysis in mid-2011. Copies of the analysis will be shared with all partners.
- 5.) Winter Maintenance
Status: The Joint Commission reviewed information presented by staff, and determined that combined Winter Maintenance functions (plowing) were not possible. At this time no further efficiencies can be identified.
- 6.) Maintenance Equipment and Services
Status: Joint purchasing of maintenance equipment among the City, County and School District continues when feasible; any opportunities for sharing maintenance services continue to be reviewed.
- 7.) Space Planning Needs of the City-County Health Department
Status: The Joint Commission heard the report of the Health Department, and has encouraged them to continue with Part A of their plan; expanding space & remodeling within the current Courthouse in concert with the Courthouse remodeling project.
- 8.) Community Television
Status: Commission held meetings with Community Television to discuss their revised business model, and updated business plan.

- 9.) Emergency Training for Elected Officials
Status: NIMS (National Incident Management System) training was completed by local emergency management personnel in the summer of 2010. Training will be repeated in the fall of 2012.
- 10.) Sustainability
Status: The City of Eau Claire and Eau Claire County (along with the City of Altoona) participate in the “25x25” Initiative. The Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce awards *Green Business* status to the City of Eau Claire and Eau Claire County.

Recommended Action Steps for 2011 – 2012

The Commission’s priorities for 2011 – 2012 should include the following:

- Establish a Service Optimization Process
 - The City, County and School District have approved a contract with consultant Craig Rapp, to assist the Commission in conducting and establishing a Service Optimization Process. Building upon the foundational efforts of the Shared Services Commission, the process will:
 - Update the Commission’s visions and mission;
 - Develop a focused multi-year work plan;
 - Develop intergovernmental governance and leadership strategies;
 - Develop factors for determining success of the Commission’s efforts.The process will entail Commission workshops; surveys on shared service opportunities with elected officials, employees and the broader community; and focus group discussions. A summary report detailing the process, priority ranking of future shared service projects, decision-matrix framework and multi-year action plan will be submitted for the Commission’s consideration.
- Implement Steps in Service Optimization Process
 - Based on results of “Service Optimization Process,” a revised plan of operation will be submitted by the Commission to the City Council, County Board and School Board for review. Subsequently, Shared Services projects and plans will be selected and implemented as described in the plan.